

Ms. McCollum: Madam Speaker, as a Co-chair of the Congressional Mentoring Caucus, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 41, supporting the goals and ideals of National Mentoring Month.

A mentor by definition means a trusted friend or guide. Mentoring relationships between adults and youths are very important, especially because of the focus on the needs of our young people. Caring parents, teachers, counselors, and religious leaders are all mentors, and are in a position to positively influence a child's present and future.

We all have an important role to play in improving the lives of children in our communities – After all, it takes a village. Our youth are yearning for guidance and direction from caring adults and mentoring enables everyday Americans to make a difference and help children grow up to become responsible and productive citizens and meet their full potential. A study by Big Brothers Big Sisters showed mentored youth are 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs, 53% less likely to skip school, and 33% less likely to get in fights.

National Mentoring Month was conceived as a means to recruit mentors and help close the mentoring gap. Last year, more than 375,000 individuals sought information about local mentoring programs that need more volunteers.

I am proud to announce Joellen Gonder-Spacek, executive director of the Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota (MPM), has been honored with the Manza Excellence in Leadership Award by MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership. She was recognized for her leadership and commitment to service through MPM's community initiative to promote mentoring for at risk youth in Minnesota. This program has made significant improvements in the lives of children and, over the past 14 years, MPM has become a mentoring leader in the state and the nation.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support this resolution and to look for opportunities to be mentors as well.